

“You Are in the Will!”
Sermon for Sunday, July 15, 2018

Our scripture lesson today comes from the New Testament book of Ephesians

--a letter written to the Christian believers at Ephesus—a city in what is modern day Turkey. Although this passage of scripture reads as several sentences in English, this was one sentence in the original Greek. It is as if once Paul got started, he simply could not get himself to stop from praising God and speaking of God’s blessings. He speaks of these things as “an inheritance”.

“In Christ we have obtained an inheritance...”

As you listen, I invite you to reflect on this question:

How does Paul describe that inheritance?

SCRIPTURE: Ephesians 1:3-14

“This is the word of God for the people of God.” “Thanks be to God!”

Have you ever watched the television show “Strange Inheritance”?

The show features stories about people who have inherited some rather strange things or they have received an inheritance that has put them in an unusual situation... like the man who inherited 250,000 Indian arrow heads! What would you do with that? (And you were worried about what to do with Grandma’s china!) Then there is the woman who left her \$1million home and a six-figure trust fund to her dog! That must be some dog!

Perhaps we have had moments where we dreamed of such an inheritance!

But have you ever considered that you are in fact the beneficiaries of an amazing inheritance from God? YOU ARE IN THE WILL!!

God has claimed you for his own... as his own child.

This was God’s plan all along... to love you... to bless you...

Even before you knew God, God was loving you!

And being accepted by God—actually being adopted by God--has nothing to do with what we DO-- because we can never be good enough.

Being adopted by God as his child has everything to do with our FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST--the one who died on the cross out of love for us to make atonement for our sins. We are brought back into right relationship with the God who already loves us through faith.

Or as Paul says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith..”

Through your faith in Jesus Christ, you have an inheritance. You are in the will!

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we receive a future inheritance.

It is the promise of eternal life... the promise that death does not have the last word for us. As Christians, we die once... we die to sin. After that the death of this body is just a passing through which we go to be with the Lord.

Dying to sin means that we repent, we change our lives and we commit ourselves to not doing it again...

When we die to sin and come to faith in Jesus Christ, then we receive our inheritance from God... the gift of eternal life

But through faith in Jesus Christ, we are also the heirs of an inheritance in this life... a present inheritance. When we have faith in Jesus Christ:

- we receive the blessing of knowing that we are loved;
- we are forgiven and made right with God.
- we come to know "a God who is gracious beyond the wildest reaches of our imagination".

Through our faith and God's grace, we have an inheritance not only in the future, but also in the present!

Jesus once told a story about inheritance... it involved two sons.

You know how it goes... it is sometimes called the story of the Prodigal Son.

We tend to focus on the younger son, who goes to his father and asks for his share of the inheritance and goes off to Las Vegas and blows it all in wild living. And when he has hit rock bottom and comes to his senses... he makes the turn toward home and the Father is already running to gather him into his arms with joy. It tells of God's amazing grace and that is very good news.

Because that is our story... the story of the Prodigal.

But I found myself thinking about the older brother—you know the one!

The one who had stayed at home.

The one who had tried to follow all the rules.

The one who gets really upset when his father is so joyful at the return of the bum younger brother.

And listen to what the older brother says when he complains about the party ad is throwing for the bum: "For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me [anything]..."

Notice that the older son says he has worked "like a slave"... not a lot of joy there... not a lot of love there.

He didn't work for his father like a loving son, he "worked like a slave".

“You gave my bum brother his inheritance... what about mine?
And now you have given my bum brother a big party... where’s my party?”

And the Father replies: “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.” The older son had failed to see that he had been receiving the best of the father’s inheritance all along! The Father’s presence... the Father’s love... the Father’s care... all that the Father had.
Yes, the younger son had received his inheritance... and he may have squandered it.
But the older son had received his share of the inheritance as well... and he failed to see it—each and every day!

You are in the will... do you see it... have you received it with joy?
Let us pray...